



The Reflector

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Can We Withdraw from the “Withdrawn?”

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he received from us.” – 2 Thess. 3:6.

A brother or sister “quits the church,” or more correctly quits the Lord. Is there anything the church can do beyond urging them to return? Usually when we suggest that maybe the church should consider withdrawing from such a one, we are faced with: “You can’t withdraw from those who have withdrawn themselves.” We do not believe that those who raise this objection are wilfully trying to avoid responsibility for discipline. I have heard it from some of the finest and more conscientious brethren that I know. But, I do believe that they have a misconception of the withdrawing process.

There is more to “withdrawing yourselves” than making a formal announcement to the church and then no longer “using them” in a public way. Many seem to think that since the quitter no longer attends and participates in congregational activities that this constitutes his having withdrawn himself so we cannot “withdraw our fellowship” since the quitter has already withdrawn himself. But this solution to the problem will not do.

We suspect that part of the problem is that of referring to discipline as “withdrawing **fellowship.**” The scriptures refer to “withdrawing **yourselves.**” There is a difference. When one

withdraws himself it is true that his spiritual fellowship is withdrawn, but it goes beyond that. One withdraws his **person**, his company, or his social association from the offending party. Surely one can do this even though the brother or sister no longer attends the meetings of the church. Such withdrawal or isolation is designed to make the offender ashamed of his conduct and produce repentance. If Christians refuse to have any social association with such a one, and let him know why they can have none, then we believe many would feel the pressure and be restored that probably would otherwise be lost. Of course, this severing of company does not preclude contacts for the purpose of admonishing (2 Thess. 3:15) and/or fulfilling other obligations one may have toward the person.

I have known many who have “withdrawn themselves” who continue to enjoy the day to day association with Christians. That association has not been severed at all. It is precisely the company (“mixing up with” – Vine’s Dictionary) that must be withdrawn. (See 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:14). Such a person can still be “marked” or “noted” by the church and then each member can withdraw his company (association) that the one might be ashamed.

The concept that we cannot withdraw from the withdrawn (meaning one who no longer attends) because he has withdrawn himself presents still another problem. Suppose a brother (or sister) becomes an adulterer but still attends all services,

sings, bows in prayer, eats the Lord's supper, etc. (we have known this to happen) — can the church withdraw from him?

"Of course, it can," you say. But wait a minute. Does the fact that he still attends regularly and participates in worship not mean that he refuses to be withdrawn from? How can the church withdraw from one who refuses to be withdrawn from? "But, we can't keep him from coming and participating," you say. Right!

"We can announce that we no longer fellowship him." Right again!

"Each member can refuse to associate with him on a day to day basis." Right one more time!

"After all, we can 'withdraw ourselves' from him even though he is regular in attendance and participates in the worship."

Now, my brother, you are beginning to get the point! If the fact that one quits means that he has "withdrawn himself" and we cannot withdraw from him — if one refuses to quit it must mean that there is nothing further we can do, since he refuses to be withdrawn from. If not, why not?

I believe that we can mark and refuse to company with a brother who walks disorderly whether or not he attends services. In fact, the very refusal to attend faithfully is walking disorderly and is grounds for marking and withdrawing ourselves.

(I wrote this in 1978 for The Reflector. I still believe it is the truth and as needed today as it was then.)

He being dead yet speaketh ...

Another Concern in the "Age of the Earth" Discussion

Edward O. (Eddie) Bragwell, Jr.

While I have great problems with any teaching that tries to reinterpret Genesis 1 to fit into "scientific natural observation" concerning the age of the earth, there is another issue that enters into this discussion that I find disturbing. I have read much material in this discussion on several web sites, and one argument that seems to come up

time and again is the supposed effect that teaching the Bible doctrine of a young earth has on those who we may be trying to reach. We are told by some that if we insist on teaching that Genesis 1 teaches literal 24 hour days (and I think it does), that there will be people that will not listen to the gospel message (1). In other words, if I want people to believe the gospel, then I have to change the message of some of the Bible. On Hill Roberts' web site, he has material in which he talks of Todd Green who is said to have lost his faith and left the church because brethren insisted on teaching the Bible doctrine of the young earth, something he could not reconcile with his "scientific knowledge" and observation (2). Roberts has other such stories that imply that we are doing great harm to the faith of others by insisting that the earth is young and rejecting what "science" tells us.

This is a dangerous line of thinking and a dangerous argument that has been often used to defend modifying Bible teaching. Through the years we have been told by some that we need to tone down our teaching on many things so as not to offend or cause people not to listen to gospel preaching. Some say we must not let people know we are from the Lord's church when we teach them, because that may prejudice them against us. Others say don't tell them what the Bible says about the hardships and sufferings that they must face after becoming Christians because this may cause them not to obey. I guess we just spring it on them after we get them wet.

By the arguments made, those who defend teaching the flawed scientific teachings of the age of the earth contrary to Bible teaching, seem to want to pull out this same line of reasoning. The consequences of such reasoning, however, extend far beyond the teachings of Genesis 1. What of those, who because of their scientific knowledge of biology and reproduction, cannot bring themselves to accept the virgin birth of Jesus? Sure the Bible says that He was born of a virgin, but we know through science that this is impossible. It is not "good biology". Are we then to stop teaching this Bible teaching or find some figurative explanation

for it so as not to cause someone to not obey the gospel, loose his “faith”, or quit the church, because he cannot reconcile the teaching of the Bible with known observed and “proven science”? It is also true that it is not scientifically viable to believe that a man could be raised up from the dead after 3 days. On and on we could go.

Brethren, we must teach the “whole counsel of God”, not just what we decide to emphasize. Some think that since “the apostolic message gives a special position (‘first importance’) to the incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, baptismal submission to and disciplinary imitation of Christ.” (1) that other Bible doctrines are not that important to the faith and therefore must be abandoned when they offend others or when others cannot reconcile them with human wisdom. I’m sorry but “all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16) and “has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Cor. 1:20).

Footnotes:

(1) Tom Couchman, “A Response to ‘The Creation Account & Florida College’”,
<http://www.geocities.com/dmathew1/gen12/response.htm>

(2) Hill Roberts, “Todd Green: Why all this matters”,
<http://lordibelieve.org/tgreen.html> .

Editor’s note: These websites may no longer exist. ■

Life Under Islam

Maurice Barnett

The Republic of the Maldives is a chain of twenty six Islands averaging a little over four feet above sea level. It is tightly ruled by Islamic law. A recent happening there graphically pictures the real danger that Islam poses for the rest of the world. Islam is constantly portrayed in this country as a “peaceful” religion. That is transparent

propaganda of the worst sort, totally false.

The Maldives Constitution, Sec. 9, limits citizenship to Muslims. Minivan News reported yesterday that 37-year old Mohamed Nazim shocked an audience during a question and answer period at a lecture Friday on ‘Misconceptions About Islam’ delivered by a visiting Indian scholar. At the lecture, Nazim engaged in a long exchange with speaker, Dr. Zakir Naik, in which Nazim announced that while he is “struggling to believe in religion,” he considers himself a Maldivian, not a Muslim. This is apparently the first time ever that a Maldivian has publicly announced he is not a Muslim. After Nazim pressed the speaker on the penalty, or apostasy, members of the audience tried to attack Nazim. Police escorted him out for his own protection and took him into custody.

Yesterday, the Islamic Foundation of the Maldives called for judges to give Nazim an opportunity to repent, and if he does not, then sentence him to death under Islamic and Maldivian law. According to Haveeru yesterday, Maldives Ministry of Islamic Affairs has asked police to investigate Nazim. The Criminal Court granted a warrant to extend Nazim’s custody for five days.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs is arranging to offer Nazim counseling to deal with his doubts about Islam. It does not take much effort to find such instances in every country dominated by Muslims. Here are just a very few of the many instances from the Koran that set the tone for Muslims—

9:5 “... fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) ...”

9:14 “Fight them, and God will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame ...”

9:29 “Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and his apostle nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth (even if they are) of the people of the Book, until they pay the Jizya [religious tax] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”

47:4 “Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers, smite at their necks, at length when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them) ... but if it had been God’s will, he could certainly have exacted retribution from them (himself), but (he lets you fight) in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the way of God, he will never let their deeds be lost.”

61:4 “Truly God loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure.”

The following are a few examples in the hadith collection of Bukhari, the most authoritative book in Sunni Islam, second only to the Qur’an (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 9 vols. translated by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Al Nabawiya: Dar Ahya Us-Sunnah, n.d.

“Allah’s Apostle said, ‘Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords.’” (vol. 4, p. 55)
 “Allah’s Apostle said, ‘I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, ‘None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,’ and whoever says, ‘None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,’ his life and property will be saved by me...” (vol. 4, p. 124)

“It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he has made a great slaughter (among his enemies) in the land...” (vol. 4, p. 161)

“Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him.” (vol. 9, p. 45) “An infidel spy came to the Prophet while he was on a journey. The spy sat with the companions of the Prophet and started talking and then went away. The Prophet said (to his companions), ‘Chase and kill him.’ So, I killed him. The Prophet then gave him the belongings of the killed spy.” (vol. 4, pp. 181-182)

“Some people from the tribe of Ukl came to the Prophet and embraced Islam. The climate of Medina did not suit them, so the Prophet ordered them to go to the (herd of milk) camels of charity and to drink their milk and urine (as a medicine). They did so, and after they had recovered from their ailment (became healthy) they turned renegades (reverted from Islam) and killed the

shepherd of the camels and took the camels away. The Prophet sent (some people) in their pursuit and so they were (caught and) brought, and the Prophet ordered that their hands and legs should be cut off and that their eyes should be branded with heated pieces of iron, and that their cut hands and legs should not be cauterized, till they die.” (vol. 8, pp. 519-520)

“The Prophet passed by me at a place called Al-Abwa or Waddan, and was asked whether it was permissible to attack the pagan warriors at night with the probability of exposing their women and children to danger. The Prophet replied, “They (i.e. women and children) are from them (i.e. pagans).” (vol. 4, pp. 158-159)

These are just a few of the statements that cover only one area of Muslim violence. The problem is that such violence applies to the entire history of Islam up to the present time. Horror stories are coming out of numerous Muslim dominated countries and even some non-Muslim countries. Death threats are made against anyone who criticizes Islam.

They expect that they can spew out their hatred in our country against any criticism of Islam and threaten violence against them. Of course, they demand special treatment that is denied to Christians and Jews. And, they are receiving special favor in this country. In fact, there are sections of one or more of our large cities, populated mostly by Muslims where Sharia (Muslim) law holds sway exclusively. And, our police stay out of it. Muslims are granted privileges other religious people do not have; they block streets with their observances, display their images while insisting that no other religion has that right; insist they are the only acceptable religion in the world and will shut down churches if they can. If they gain enough power in these United States, they will win. Be aware, and be ready. Warn others about the danger we face. ■

Brother Barnett has had some serious health problems lately. I know he would appreciate your prayers on his behalf. – eob.
